

William Doreski – Three Poems

Stay in Your Lane

Crushing green chemical water
with your flagellant stroke, you steer
dead ahead, curb to curb, lap

after lap, inhaling the vapors
you generate with your power.
You've always been a mermaid.

How often have I drowned inside
the whirlpool of your embrace?
Now with age upon us the slick

of an enclosed and heated pool claims
the better part of your energy,
excluding the smallest distraction.

The heavy institutional tile
looks stoic enough to outlast
the Baths of Caracalla. Ropes

strung through Styrofoam floats
throb like heartstrings as you pass
in a thrashing of elegant limbs.

I aspire to distract you within
but not outside your lane, divert
you so slightly no one will notice.

The other swimmers bob like seals.
They don't take the water as fully
as you do, absorbing its light

so your lane darkens behind you
as if the shadow of some creature,
a guardian spirit, followed.

When you climb dripping into air,
the pool looks bereft. Your shadow
erases itself, filling with green

that smells more of sea-bottom
than of bromine. I admire the fact
of you exposed by your swimsuit,

but wonder that someone who holds
such a massive place in the cosmos
still managed to stay in her lane.

A Fish-Goddess

Faces prowling Dutch paintings
the day before Thanksgiving
focus on the nearest masterpiece,
accessible with headphones trickling
digital commentary fresh
from the funnybone of intellect.

The smell of the paint faded
long ago, but the ghost of it
teases memory, parsing nations
to reveal the genius and failure
that have privatized all history.
Meanwhile in your big sweater
you look almost as lifelike
as a portrait by Frans Hals.

Hals didn't paint you, but
some other Haarlem artist did.
In a large cityscape with frieze
of gyrating people, a figure
in brown is obviously you.
Your wry approach to the world
skews the figure toward stage right.
The basket of fish you carry
shines like a packet of bullion.

The painter caught you off-guard,
our expression poised between yes
and no, the swing of your hips
a powerful act of logic.
Admit that you posed for this crowd
scene three hundred and fifty
years ago. Don't deny that fumes
from your rotting fish infest
this hallowed and pricey museum.

The crowd surges around Vermeer.
Two little paintings gleaming
with genius the color of old shoes.
I prefer the crowd scene with you
and your fish basket. The sweep
of your lush sweater brightens
the dim-lit galleries, most patrons
unaware that a fish-goddess
stalks about with pure intent.

Red and White Stripes

Framed in the red and white stripes
of your six pillows, your face
goes adrift, warping into places
I can't enter without mourning
the forty years we discarded
like a cargo of empty oil drums.

The city grumbles to itself
with most of its passions muted
by the buzz of construction sites
and the criminal expressions
of cops in fresh new uniforms.
We should visit the museum

with its Dutch masters blazing
and Goya too angry to paint
but painting anyway, on and on
into black and gray infinities.
We should lunch like typical
elderly couples, late blooming

over delicate little sandwiches
and glasses of oily white wine.
In a few minutes the patter
of your bare feet on the hardwood
will present angles of vision
no one since Adam has enjoyed.

The snore of traffic will become
gossip of epic proportions,
and the stoplights will pause
in yellow for hours at a time.

The cops will almost learn to smile,
creasing their aggressive trousers.

Then you'll fade into distance
rendered geological by habits
we hope to acquire. And then
I'll know why the red and white
stripes of your pillows say nothing
of ordinary blood and flesh.

Besides appearing in *Muddy River Poetry Review* five years ago, **William Doreski's** work has appeared in various e and print journals and in several collections, most recently *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (AA Press, 2013).